

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP



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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN

WINNER
OF THE COMIC-BOOK
INDUSTRY'S OWN

ACADEMY
AWARD

FOR BEST
COMIC-MAG!



barry smith

THIS
ISSUE'S
THRILLER!

THE MONSTER OF THE MONOLITHS!

ROY THOMAS and BARRY SMITH * DAN ADKINS & CRAIG RUSSELL & VAL MAYERIK & SAL BUSCEMA * ARTIE SIMEK *
WRITER/EDITOR LAYOUTS EMBELLISHERS ALL! LETTERER

INSPIRED IN PART BY THE STORY "THE BLACK STONE" by ROBERT E. HOWARD, creator of Conan

Monster of the Monoliths!

THE
WAKING SUN
SENDS TENDRILS
OF FAINT GOLD
CREEPING
AMONGST THE
SHADOWED
SPIRES OF
BELEAGURED
MAKKALET.

ON THIS MORN,
AFTER A DISASTROUS
RELIANCE UPON SEA
AND SOLDIERY TO
PROTECT THEM, THE
SUBJECTS OF THIS
HYRKANIAN CITY-
STATE BEGIN AT
LAST TO BUILD
MAKESHIFT BARRICADES
TO KEEP OUT THE
BESIEGING
TURANIANS...

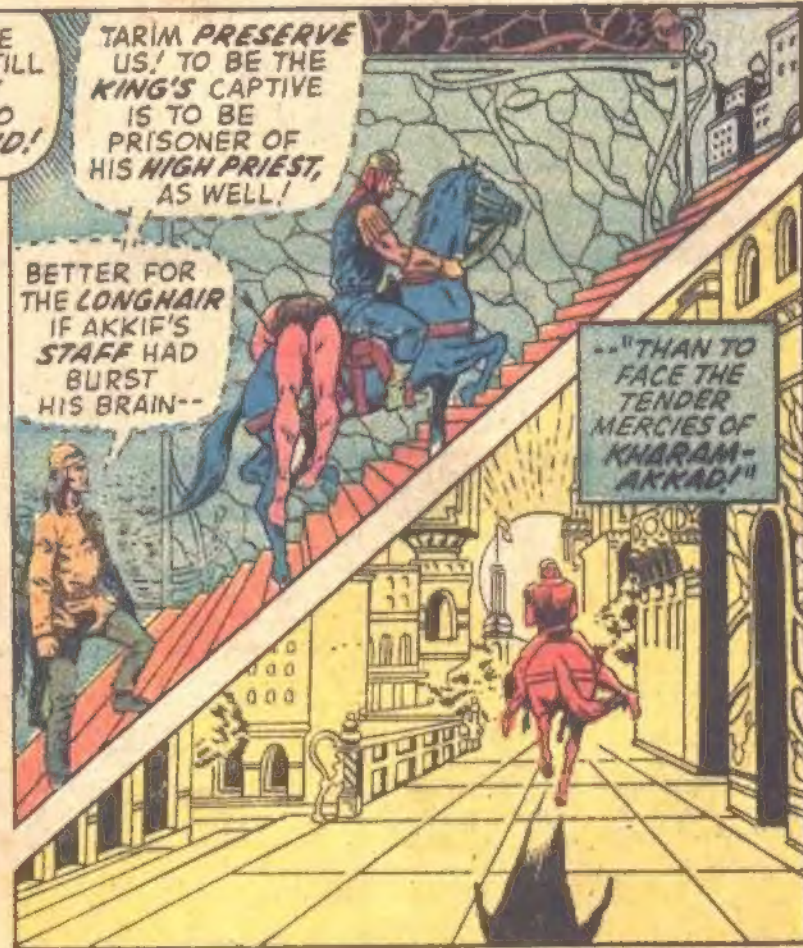
**AND NOW, SUDDENLY,
HAND AND HAMMER
ALIKE CEASE THEIR
RHYTHMIC RISING AND
FALLING...**

...**A**S, AT THE FOOT
OF THE MARBLED
STEPS OF THE CITY'S
MAIN WHARF...

...**A** MAN PULLS
HIMSELF SLOWLY,
PAINFULLY,
FROM GENTLY
LAPPING WATERS.

...AND KNOWS IN THAT MOMENT THAT HE HAS STUMBLERD BLINDLY INTO HELL!





CONAN TOSSES FITFULLY, HIS SLEEP DISTURBED BY THE NOISE OF SLAUGHTER, THE CRIES OF THE DYING...

...SOUNDS WHICH, IN TRUTH, ARE BUT PART AND PARCEL OF HIS DREAM.



HE WAKES AT LAST, HIS SHOULDER-BLADE THROBBING WHERE BEFORE A SHAFT HAD STUNG...



...AND WONDERS, PERHAPS, WHY HE IS ALIVE AT ALL!



IT IS EVER AN HONOR TO BREAK MY FAST WITH YOU, MAJESTY...

I WAS MERELY... CURIOUS TO LEARN WHAT HAD BEFALLEN THAT YOUNG BARBARIAN WE SURPRISED LAST EVENING IN YOUR TEMPLE.

YOUNG, MY QUEEN?

SCARCELY MORE SO THAN YOURSELF, I TROW.



HE ESCAPED, YOU KNOW... YET CRAWLED ASHORE AGAIN, AT SUNRISE...



...A TURANIAN ARROW JUTTING FROM HIS BROAD BARBARIAN BACK!



BUT, I SEE HIS HIGHNESS IS UP AND ABOUT. WE WERE JUST SPEAKING, MY LORD ABOUT--

--ABOUT HOW OUR FOES HAVE NOT DARED ATTACK AGAIN SINCE THEIR LANDING ATTEMPT FAILED.

AH, YES... QUITE SO.

THEY'LL TRY AGAIN, NEVER FEAR.

AS LONG AS THE TARIK IS OURS... THEY'LL TRY AGAIN.



NIGHT FALLS AGAIN... AND FROM HIS STREET-LEVEL CELL, CONAN SEES MERELY A BUSTLE OF ACTIVITY AMONG THE HYRKANIAN'S THEMSELVES.

HE WONDERS ABSENTLY WHY YEZDIGERD HAS NOT RENEWED HIS ASSAULT.

HE SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS... AND HE SLEEPS.



THEN, COMES MORNING...

SO, THERE HE IS! NO, NO--DON'T JUMP AT ME, FELLOW! I'M BUT THE COURT PHYSICIAN--

--HERE TO SEE ABOUT YOUR WOUND.



SINCE WHEN DID MAKKALET'S LEECHES TREAT THOSE WHO HAVE RAISED SWORDS AGAINST HER?

SINCE THE QUEEN COMMANDED THEM TO, THAT'S SINCE WHEN.

YOU SEEM FIT. NOW COME...



...OUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES ARE WAITING FOR YOU.





YOU HEARD HIM, SAVAGE. MOVE--

--WHILE YOUR EARS ARE STILL YOUR OWN!



WHAT IS YOUR NAME, GUARD?

KHURUSAN.

AND I AM CONAN. WE SHALL MEET AGAIN.



...IT IS A SACRED PRIVILEGE, OUTLANDER, TO BE PERMITTED EVEN TO GROVEL BEFORE THEIR MAJES--HOLD!

WHAT--?

THE TARIM COMES! DOWN, YE FAITHFUL--

PROSTRATE YOURSELVES BEFORE THE TARIM INCARNATE!

THAT HOODED ONE--IS THE TARIM!?



THE MAN-GOD... DESCENDANT OF A LINE OF MAN-GODS?

THE ONE THIS HOLY WAR IS FOUGHT TO POSSESS?

DOWN, SON OF A PIG--DOWN!

NO! I WOULD SEE WHAT LITTLE I CAN OF THIS MARVEL!



THE PROCESSION PASSES, THEN...

DOG! I SHOULD DISSEMBLE YOU FOR SUCH BLASPHEMY!

TAKE OFF MY CHAINS, RATHER--AND I'LL SEND YOU TO MEET THE FIRST TARIM, IN HYRKANIAN HEAVEN!



E-ENOUGH BANTER! ROYALTY AWAITS WITHIN!

I HOPE THEY SEND YOU BACK TO YEZDIGERD... MINUS YOUR HEAD!



...MY THANKS, KHARAM, FOR NOT TELLING MY LORD I WALKED ABROAD LAST NIGHT.

IT WOULD BUT UPSET HIM. HE FEARS EVER FOR YOUR SAFETY.

A LOVELY GOWN, MAJESTY. NEW, IS IT NOT...?



GUARDS! BRING IN THE BARBARIAN!



BOW, OFFAL--BOW LOW BEFORE KING EANNIATUM AND QUEEN MELISSANDRA ...AND KHARAM--AKKAD, SUPREME PRIEST OF THE TRUE TARIM!



BLUE FIRE SMOULDERING IN HIS EYES, CONAN SLOWLY LIFTS HIS GAZE...

AND, IN THAT INSTANT,
IT FALLS UPON THE
QUEEN WHOM MEN HAVE
NAMED MELISSANDRA...



**...YET WHO, TO CONAN,
SHALL EVER BE THE
TEMPLE-MAID WHO
CALLED HERSELF...
CAISSA.**



**NOW,
OUTLANDER...
TELL US
WHO YOU
ARE...**



**...AND HOW YOU CAME TO
LEAVE THE TURANIAN
HOSTS SO ABRUPTLY.**

**I AM CONAN,
A CIMMERIAN.
A TURANIAN
SLEW MY
FRIEND...SO
I KILLED
HIM.**

**IT SEEMS
THIS
TURANIAN
WAS A FRIEND
OF YEZDIGERD
HIMSELF...**

**...SO I
THOUGHT
IT BEST
TO JUMP
SHIP.**

**AN AMUSING
TALE. SHALL WE
BELIEVE HIM,
DO YOU THINK,
MY DEAR?**

**AYE, MY LORD...
I THINK WE
SHOULD.**



**THEN, BY THE
TARIM INCARNATE,
WE SHALL!**

**THE MORE SO,
SINCE MAKKALET
HAS NEED OF SUCH
A ONE IN THIS,
ITS HOUR OF
TRAVAIL.**

**I EXPECTED AS
MUCH.**

**WELL, TELL ME
WHAT YOU WANT
OF ME--AND I'LL
DO IT.**

**AND ALL
I WANT
IN
RETURN...**



**...IS A FAST
HORSE, AND
THE SHORTEST
ROUTE BACK
TOWARD
THE WEST.**



**YOU'LL HAVE BOTH,
CIMMERIAN...NOW THAT
WE ARE OLD FRIENDS.**



**MEAN-
WHILE...**

**MEANWHILE,
HAVE ONE OF
YOUR
BOOTLICKS
TAKE THESE
CHAINS OFF
ME!**

**PRESUME NOT
UNDULY
UPON OUR
NEWFOUND
FRIENDSHIP,
CONAN.**



STILL...

**COME, FELLOW.
I'LL TELL YOU
ALL YOU NEED
KNOW OF OUR
TASK.**

**I'D RATHER
FIND OUT WHO
IS THE TRUE
RULER OF
MAKKALET...**



**THE KING...
OR HIS
HIGH
PRIEST.**

SOON, WHEN THE MISSION AHEAD HAS BEEN FULLY OUTLINED...

...THEN WE MUST BREACH THE CIRCLE OF TURANIANS AROUND US, AND RIDE TO THE CITY OF THE QUEEN'S FATHER, KHURUSAN?

AYE, HE IS OBLIGED BY THE MARRIAGE TO GIVE AID TO MAKKALET, IF EVER IT IS REQUESTED.

AND, REQUEST IT WE SHALL...

...IF WE PASS THRU THAT RING OF TORCHES ALIVE.

MY LADY...

FORGIVE US, THAT WE DID NOT HEAR YOUR APPROACH...

FORGIVEN. LEAVE ME NOW... WITH THE OUTLANDER.

I... AM GLAD YOU HAVE JOINED US, CIMMERIAN.

OUR HYRKANIAN HELMETS WILL BECOME YOU...

YOU DIDN'T COME HERE TO SAY THAT.

NO, I CAME TO GIVE YOU... THIS ARMLET.

IT IS RUNE-CARVED, AND SO IT MAY KEEP YOU SAFE...

...TILL YOU COME BACK TO... US.

MINUTES LATER, A SECRET GATE IS FURTIVELY RAISED...

AND FOUR GRIM, SILENT HORSE-MEN GALLOP FORTH, BENEATH THE STAR-FLECKED SKY.

THERE IS NO MOON THIS NIGHT... BUT THERE ARE MANY STARS...

...PERHAPS
NEARLY AS
MANY AS
THERE ARE
GLEAMING
SWORDS...

...IN THE TURANIAN
WAR-CAMP WHICH
COMPLETELY GIRDS
THE EMBATTLED CITY.

MAKAALET IS
SURROUNDED
BY LAND AND
SEA, SIRE.

IT CANNOT
SURVIVE MORE
THAN A FEW
WEEKS.

FOR, SO LONG AS THE BLACK-
MANED BARBARIAN WHO
GAVE ME THIS SCAR STILL
WALKS THE FACE OF THE
EARTH...

EVEN FOR
SO LONG IS
YEZDIGERD
THE MOST
MISERABLE
OF MEN.

SOON, THOUGH,
A SHADOW
SHALL FALL
ACROSS THIS
DOOMED
LAND...

...THE SHADOW
OF THE
VULTURE!

THERE IS
HALF A MILE
DISTANCE
BETWEEN THE
WALLS OF
MAKAALET
AND THE
SINISTER
CAMPFIRES
OF THE
TURANIANS.

THOUGH CONAN
IS AN ILL-
EXPERIENCED
HORSEMAN, HIS
STEED ITSELF
KNOWS TO KEEP
ITS HOOFEATS
MUFFLED...

...SO THAT THEY PASS
CLOSE ENOUGH BY
YEZDIGERD'S OWN TENTS...

TO HEAR A BAWDY
JEST COME DRIFTING
UP THRU THE CHILL
NIGHT AIR.

THEN, A DARK GLADE LOOMS
BEFORE THE QUARTET OF
RIDERS...

EYES DARTING RIGHT,
THEN LEFT, THE
SOMBRE HORSEMEN
ENTER THE GLADE...

NO BIRD
SCREAMS OR
TWITTERS...
NO FROG IS
HEARD TO
CROAK...

...A GLADE WHICH LIES BETWEEN
THE SECTIONS OF A THICK-WOODED
FOREST WHICH ALONE MAY
PROVIDE THEM PASSAGE THRU
THE TURANIAN HOSTS.



THEN SUDDENLY,
GALLOPING FROM
THE FOREST--

ABOMINATIONS
OF ERLIK!

YONDER--TWO
TURANIAN
SCOUTS!

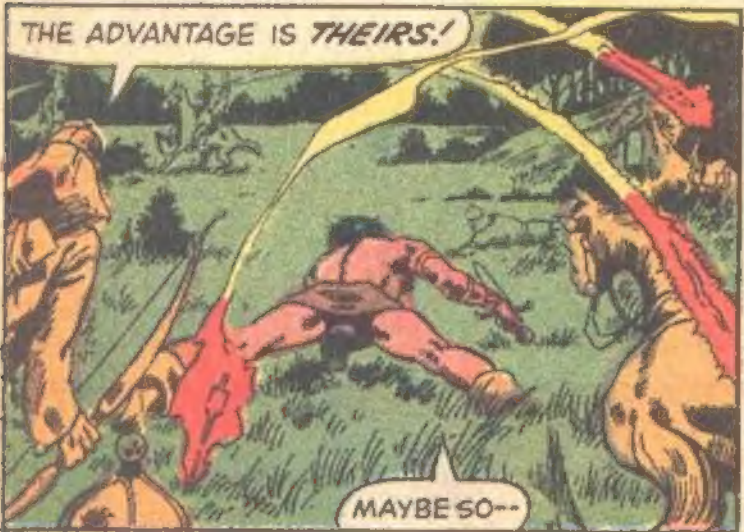
AND
ARMED
WITH--



--FLAMING
ARROWS



CROM!



THE ADVANTAGE IS *THEIRS!*

MAYBE SO--



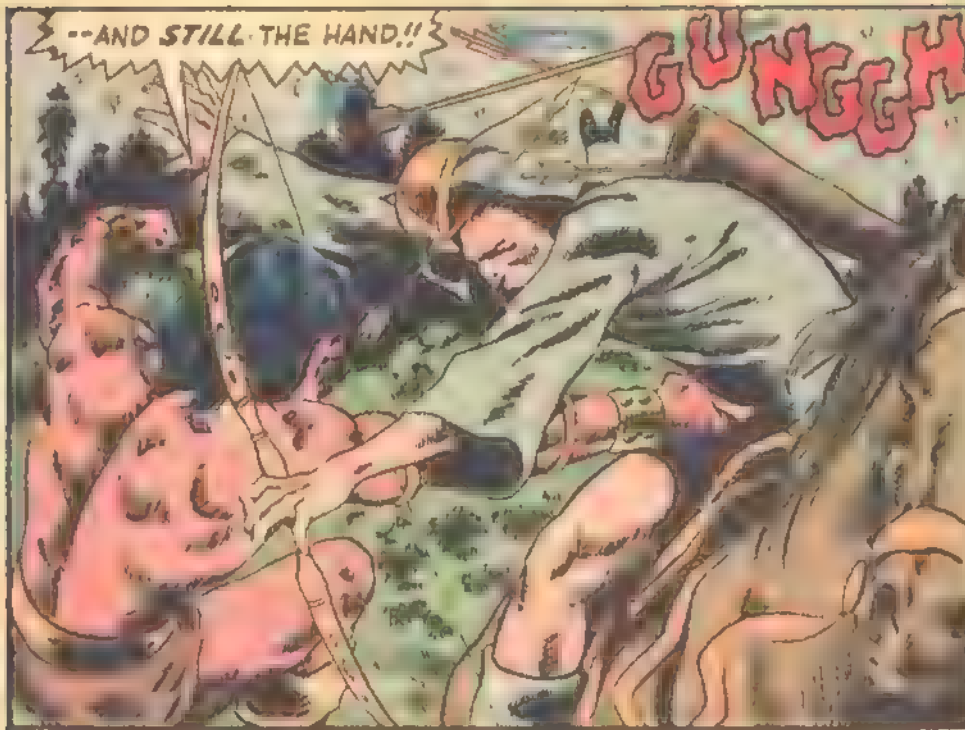
THEN, TO THE
DEVIL WITH
SUCH UNMANLY
WEAPONS!



JUST GIVE
ME A
BROAD-
SWORD--
AND A
RUNNING
START--



--AND I'LL
FORGET THE
BOW--



--AND STILL THE HAND!!

GUNG



ALL RIGHT, BRAVE WARRIORS OF THE EAST... YOU CAN COME CLOSER NOW.

HERE LIE TWO TURANIAN BOWMEN WHO WILL LOOSE NO MORE ARROWS.



OUR THANKS, BARBARIAN. NOW NOTHING IS LIKE TO BAR OUR WAY TO--

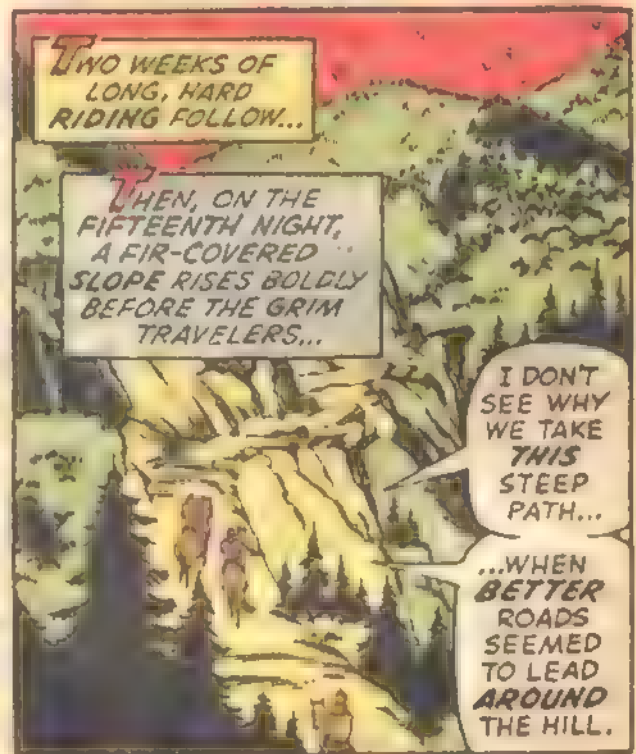
KHURUSAN... I KILLED THEM FOR YOU... NOW SHUT UP!



I KNEW THOSE TWO, WHEN I WAS A SOLDIER OF TURAN...

AND EITHER OF THEM WAS WORTH A REGIMENT OF YOU!

THE ROAD LIES OPEN NOW...



TWO WEEKS OF LONG, HARD RIDING FOLLOW...

THEN, ON THE FIFTEENTH NIGHT, A FIR-COVERED SLOPE RISES BOLDLY BEFORE THE GRIM TRAVELERS...

I DON'T SEE WHY WE TAKE THIS STEEP PATH...

...WHEN BETTER ROADS SEEMED TO LEAD AROUND THE HILL.



IT WAS THE QUEEN HERSELF WHO HAD US MAKE THIS SMALL DETOUR, CIMMERIAN...



THERE ARE... CERTAIN RITES TO PERFORM, IF VICTORY FOR MAKKALET IS TO BE ASSURED.



AND, THE SOLE PLACE ON THE GODS' GREEN EARTH TO PERFORM THEM...



...IS THERE!!

A WIDE GLADE SEEMS TO UNFOLD THEM, AND IN ITS CENTER...

THE BLACK MONOLITHS OF XUTHLTAN!

AND THERE'S JUSTIN, THE BLIND HERMIT-- JUST LIKE ALWAYS!

BUT *THIS* YEAR, IT SEEMS-- SOMETHING *NEW* HAS BEEN ADDED!

SOMETHING MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN AN EYE-DOG, TOO!

NO, GREYBEARD! *BESTIR* YOURSELF!

HELP US READY THE SACRIFICIAL BRAZIER!

THIS VERY NIGHT, WHEN THE MOON IS RIGHT, WE'LL MAKE OUR PRAYERS TO THE GOD WITH NO NAME!

WHAT? *FOOL!* DO YOU KNOW WHAT NIGHT THIS IS-- WHAT NIGHT, OF ALL NIGHTS?

I KNOW WELL ENOUGH, HERMIT.

NOW, STILL THAT INSOLENT TONGUE OF YOURS...

OR WOULD YOU JUST AS SOON BE SILENT...

...AS WELL AS BLIND?

UDLY CURIOUS, CONAN GUIDES HIS MOUNT CLOSER TO THE REARING STONES...

THE HALF-DEFACTED CARVINGS THEREON LOOK SOMEHOW OMINOUSLY FAMILIAR...

*B*UT, HE CANNOT BE SURE...

SO HE TURNS AWAY, IN TIME TO HEAR...

"They say foul things of olden times still lurk In dark forgotten corners of the world..."

YOU KNOW WHAT IS WRITTEN...

"...And gates still gape to loose... on certain nights..."

"...Shapes pent in Hell!"

FATHER... PLEASE...

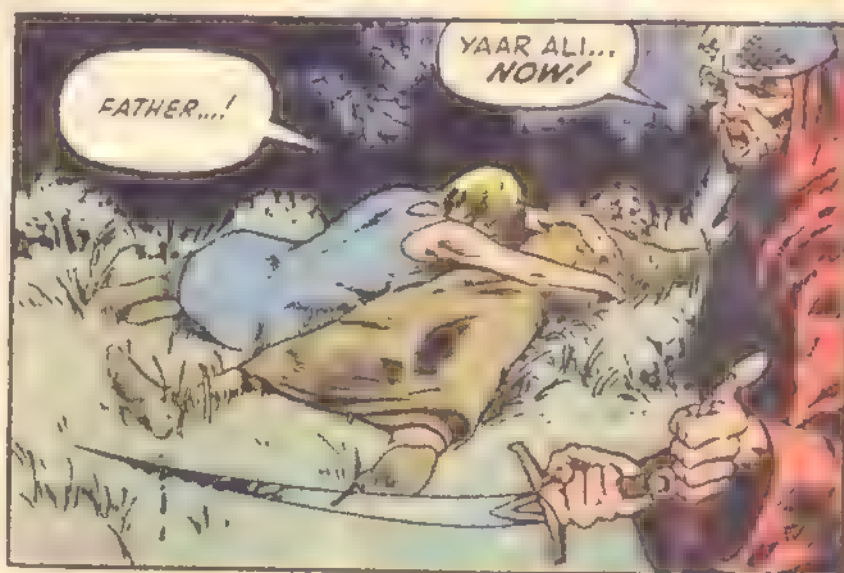
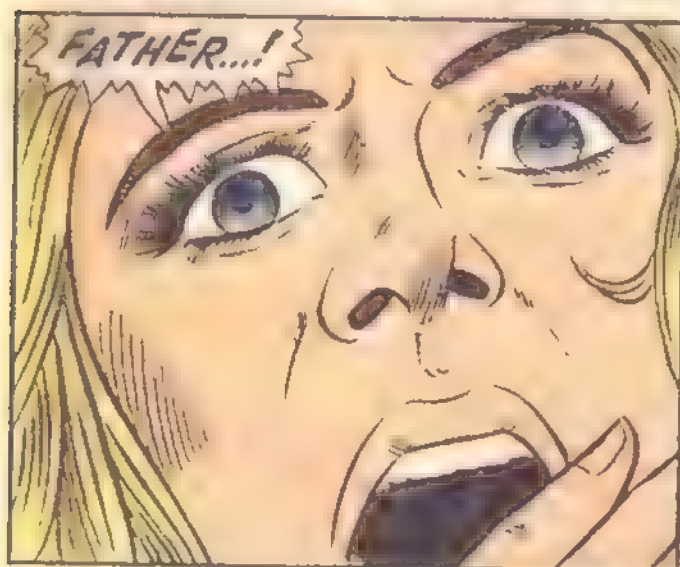
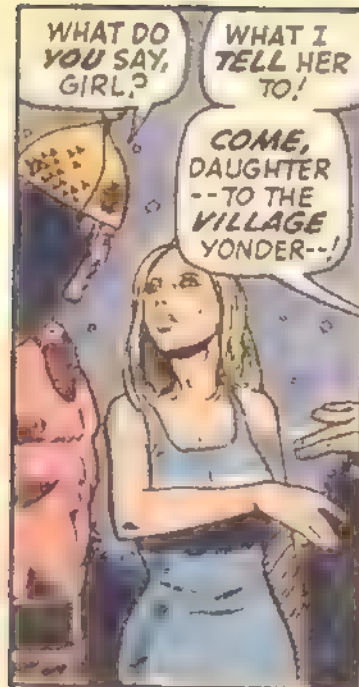
HUSH, GIRL. I MERELY SAID... WHAT I HAD TO SAY!

CERTAIN NIGHTS? WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT, OLD MAN?

YOUR ACCENTS 'TELL ME YOU'RE NOT OF HYRKANIAN BIRTH, BOY.

THEN RIDE, I PRAY THEE-- RIDE FAR AWAY AND FAST!

I'LL SAY NO MORE.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT, MAN... BUT YOU'LL PAY FOR IT!

THOSE WHO RULE IN MAKKALET--

--ARE THEY WHO HAVE COMMANDED THIS DEED, BARBARIAN!

SHOCKED? YOU SHOULDN'T BE, WE HYRKANIAN ARE AN ANCIENT RACE...

WE KNOW, BETTER THAN ANY, THAT THERE ARE OLDER GODS THAN THE LIVING TARIM TO BE PROPITIATED IF MAKKALET IS TO BE SAVED...

AND TONIGHT-- WE MAKE SACRIFICE TO THOSE GODS!

...SPAWN OF THOSE WHO ONCE REIGNED IN OCEAN-LOST LEMURIA.

YAAR ALI...AKHAAN...STEP CLOSER, THAT YOU MAY WITNESS THIS MOST UNHOLY RITE!

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE ARE CLOSE ENOUGH TO--

WE COME, KHURUSAN...THOUGH MOST UNWILLINGLY.

NOT NEARLY CLOSE ENOUGH, YAAR ALI...

NOT NEARLY CLOSE ENOUGH AT ALL!

AIEE

MY ORDERS, YOU SEE... WERE THAT THERE BE NO WITNESSES.

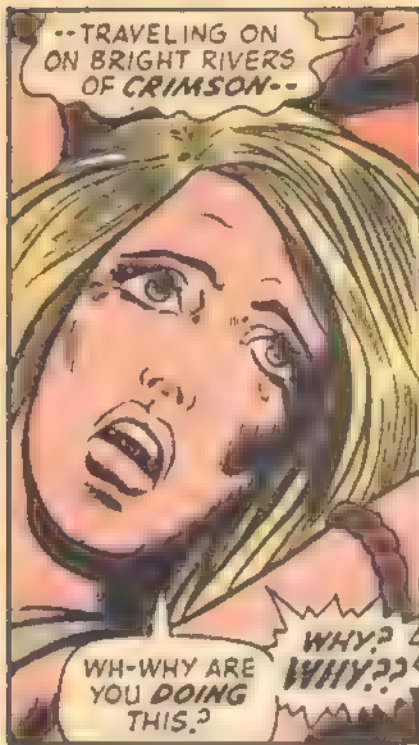
AND NOW, MY DEAR, YOU SHALL BECOME...THE OPENER OF THE WAY.

NO! K-KEEP AWAY--!

HEAR ME, O TALONED LORDS WHO YET LURK IN NAMELESS GULFS--

THE MIDDLE EVE OF SUMMER IS AT HAND--!

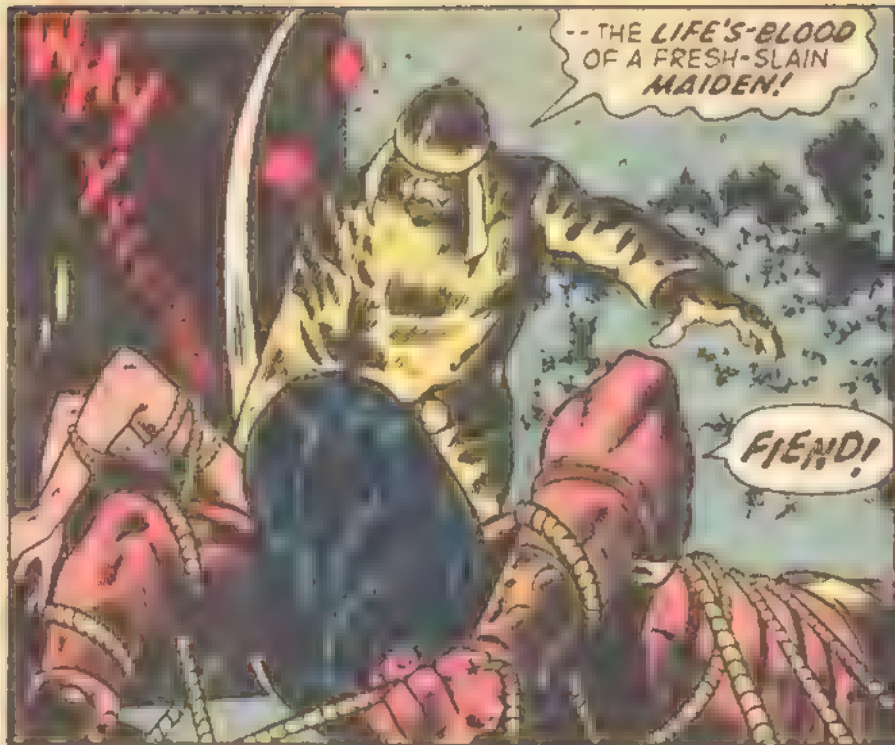
--THAT NIGHT ALONE WHEN YOU MAY PASS FROM THY WORLD INTO OURS--



--TRAVELING ON
ON BRIGHT RIVERS
OF CRIMSON--

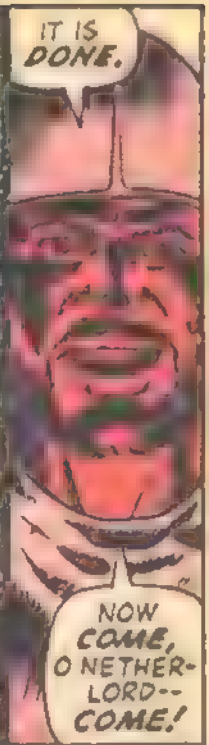
WH-WHY ARE
YOU DOING
THIS?

WHY?
WHY??



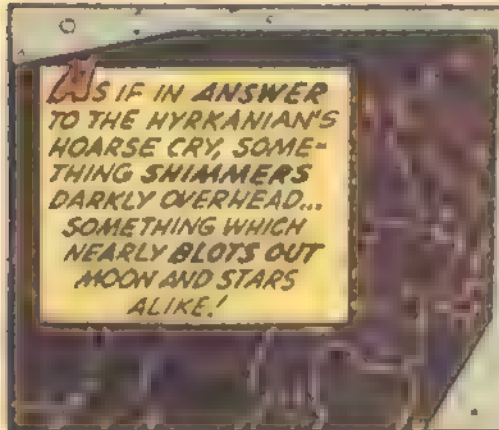
-- THE LIFE'S-BLOOD
OF A FRESH-SLAIN
MAIDEN!

FIEND!

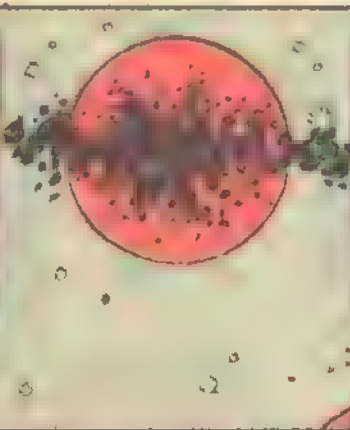


IT IS
DONE.

NOW
COME,
O NETHER-
LORD--
COME!



AS IF IN ANSWER
TO THE HYRKANIAN'S
HOARSE CRY, SOME-
THING SHIMMERS
DARKLY OVERHEAD...
SOMETHING WHICH
NEARLY BLOTS OUT
MOON AND STARS
ALIKE!



IT SEEMS TO
CONGEAL...
TO CLOT LIKE
BLOOD...!

AND, EYES
STRAINING,
CONAN
SEES--

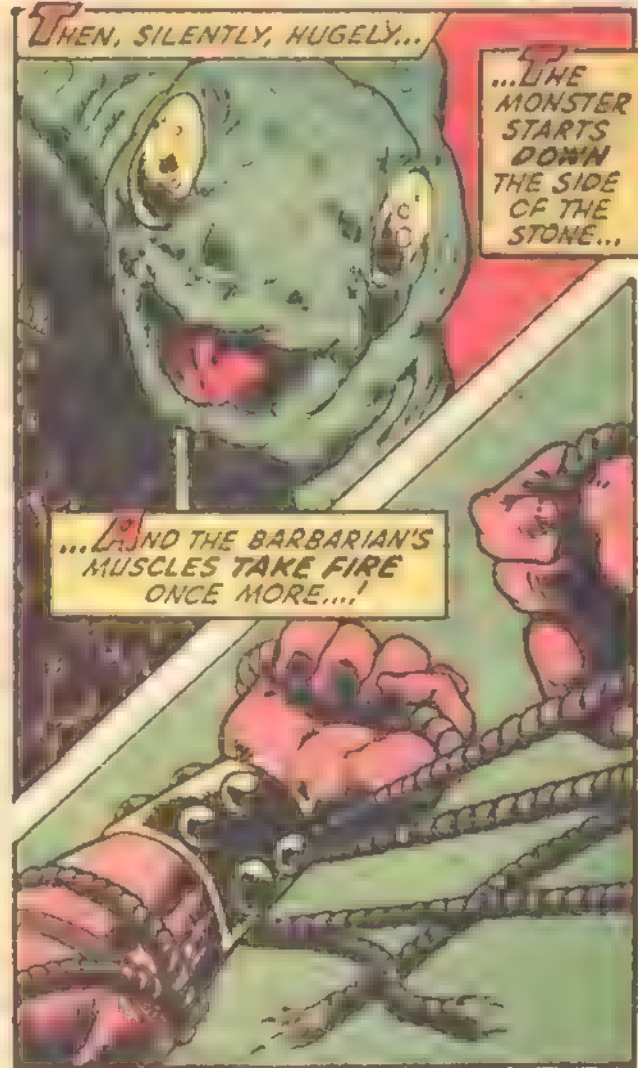


MONSTROUS,
TOAD-LIKE
THING...

...SQUATTING
BLACKLY
ATHWART
THE TWIN
MONOLITHS!



FOR A
MOMENT
CONAN
CEASES EVEN
TO STRUGGLE,
HIS MIND
FROZEN BY
SPELL-
BINDING
FEAR...



THEN, SILENTLY, HUGE...

...THE
MONSTER
STARTS
DOWN
THE SIDE
OF THE
STONE...

...AND THE BARBARIAN'S
MUSCLES TAKE FIRE
ONCE MORE...!

**IN SUCH A BLAZE AS THIS,
WHAT HASTILY-TIED BONDS
MAY STAND?**



**YET, EVEN AS HUMAN
PANTHER LEAPS--EVEN
AS TENSE, FREED
HANDS GRASP A
FALTERING SWORD--**



**--THOSE CORDS
WHICH BIND
THE LEGS
HOLD FIRM--**

**--AND
CONAN HAS
REACHED
THE END OF
HIS ROPE--**



**--IN WAYS A
FUTURE WORLD
WILL
UNDERSTAND.**



**FOR, STILL
THE TOAD-
THING
CRAWLS
SLOWLY,
SURELY
DOWN THE
CRACKED
STONE
FACE...**



**AND
STILL THE
MAN
LIFTS WILD
HANDS, AND
MOUTHS
FORGOTTEN
WORDS!**

**MAN OF MAKKALET!
I'VE LEARNED BEFORE
THAT THOSE WHO
CALL UP MONSTERS
FROM THE PIT...**



**...CANNOT
ALWAYS
CONTROL
THEM.**

**SO
WE'LL
SEE WHAT
HAPPENS...**



**...WHEN YOU
STAND
NEARER TO
THAT
LOATHSOME
THING THAN
I DO!**

NOW, MORE CLEARLY THAN BEFORE, CONAN BEHOLDS THE MONSTER'S BLOATED, REPULSIVE, AND UNSTABLE OUTLINE IN THE CASCADING MOONLIGHT...

AND, SET IN WHAT WOULD BE THE FACE OF A NATURAL CREATURE, HE SEES ITS HUGE, UNBLINKING EYES--EYES WHICH REFLECT ALL THE LUST, THE ABYSMAL GREED, THE OBSCENE CRUELTY AND NAMELESS EVIL THAT HAVE STALKED THE SONS OF MEN SINCE THEIR ANCESTORS HOWLED BLIND AND HAIRLESS IN THE TREETOPS!

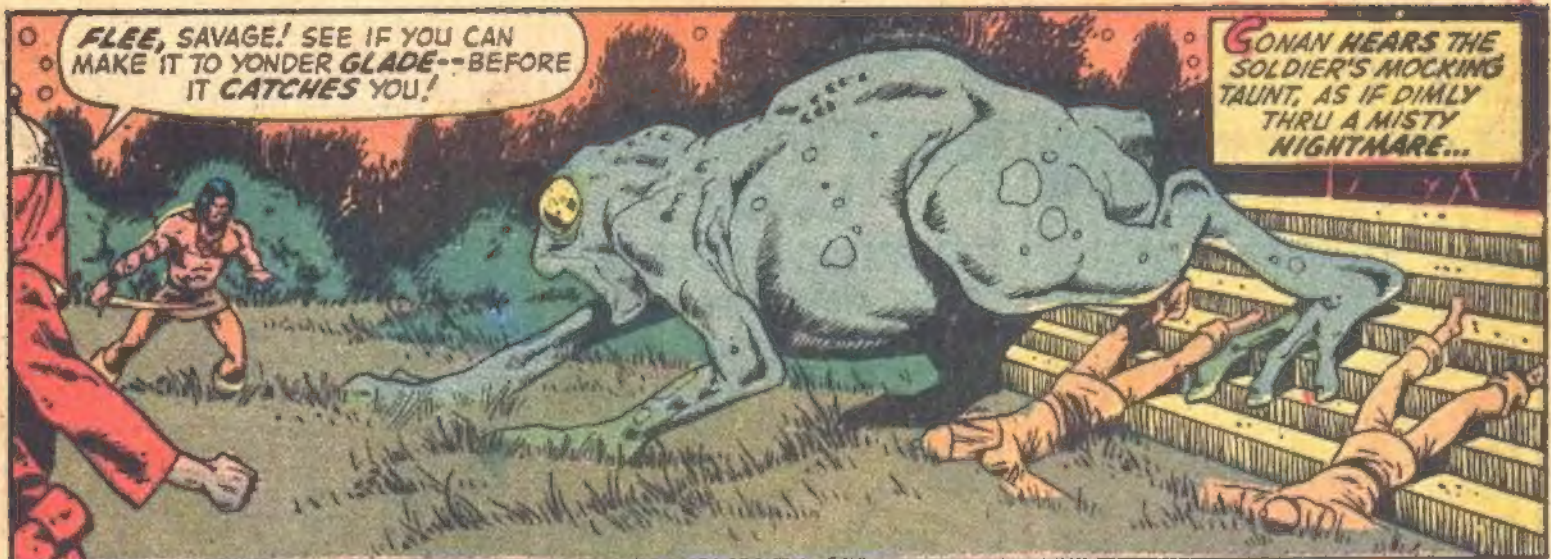
IN THOSE GRISLY EYES ARE MIRRORED ALL THE UNHOLY THINGS AND VILE SECRETS THAT SLEEP IN THE CITIES UNDER THE SEA, AND THAT SKULK FROM THE LIGHT OF DAY IN THE BLACKNESS OF PRIMORDIAL CAVERNS.

ALL THIS, CONAN GLIMPSES--AND FORGETS--IN AN INSTANT!

FOR, IN THAT SAME MIND-BLASTING INSTANT, HE ALSO SEES--THAT THE MONSTER IS COMING FOR HIM!

IGNORING THE FALLEN, STUMBLING HYRKANIAN...PASSING BY THE LIFELESS FORMS WHOSE BLOOD-SACRIFICE HAS CALLED IT UP FROM NIGHT-DARK DEPTHS...

...IT IS COMING FOR HIM!!



FLEE, SAVAGE! SEE IF YOU CAN MAKE IT TO YONDER GLADE--BEFORE IT CATCHES YOU!

CONAN HEARS THE SOLDIER'S MOCKING TAUNT, AS IF DIMLY THRU A MISTY NIGHTMARE...



HE TURNS FOR A SECOND... VIEWS THE DARK SHRUBS WHICH LIE TO HAND, AND WHICH MIGHT HIDE HIM FROM THIS THING THAT WALKS...

...LOOKS, AND KNOWS HE WOULD NEVER REACH THEM ALIVE!



AND SO, HE TURNS BACK TOWARD THE SLITHERING TOAD-THING...



...KNOWING HE MUST STAND HIS GROUND... AND CONQUER...



...OR DIE!

CROM!

THAT DEVIL TOOK MY SCIMITAR IN-- UP TO THE HILT-- AND STILL IT LIVES!



FRENZIED, CONAN CURSES THE GODS WHO SENT HIM TO THIS LEPROUS LAND...

AND, IN THAT SELFSAME MOMENT...



...HE SUDDENLY KNOWS...

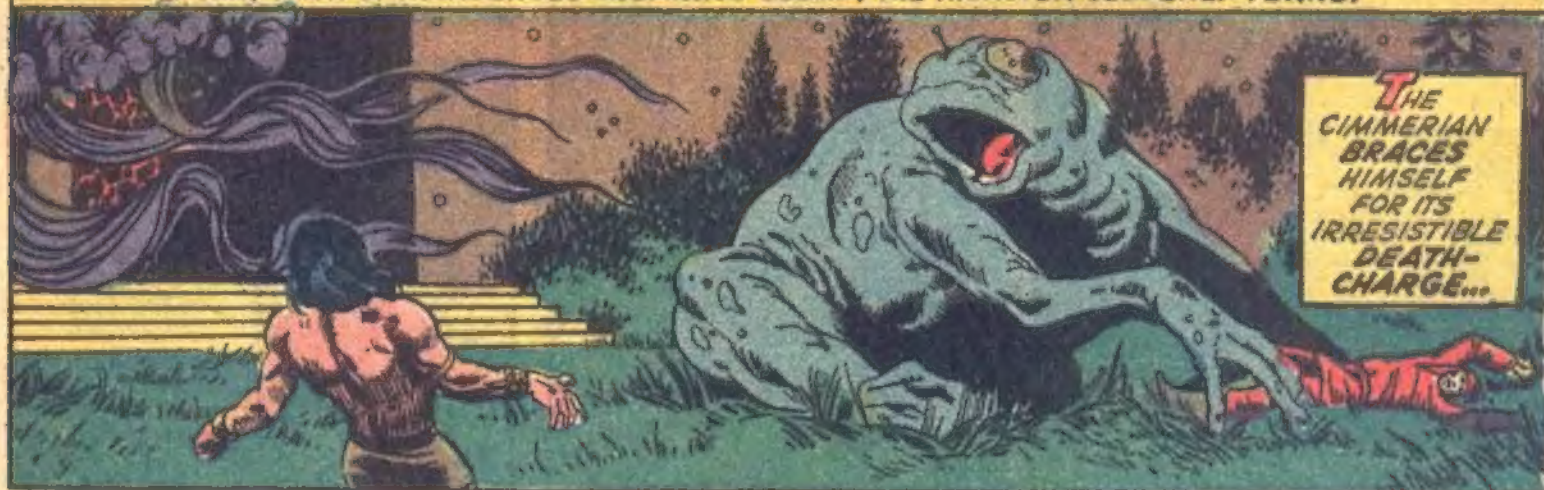


...THAT THE UNKNOWN RUNES CARVED SO LONG AGO UPON THE PIT-BLACK MONOLITHS...

...PRECISELY MATCH THOSE GRAVEN ON THE ARMLET GIVEN HIM BY THE QUEEN!

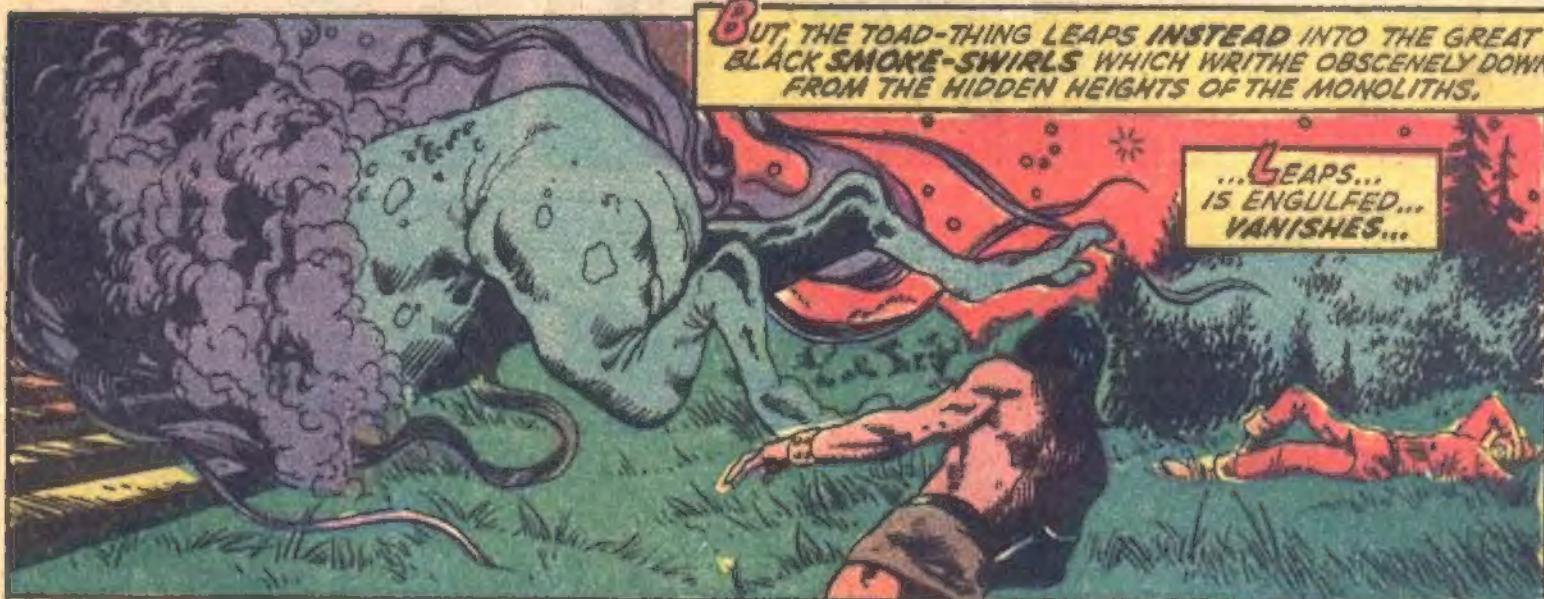


THEN, WITH A THUNDEROUS CROAKING SOUND, THE MONSTER SUDDENLY TURNS!



THE Cimmerian BRACES HIMSELF FOR ITS IRRESISTIBLE DEATH-CHARGE...

BUT, THE TOAD-THING LEAPS INSTEAD INTO THE GREAT BLACK SMOKE-SWIRLS WHICH WRITHE OBSCENELY DOWN FROM THE HIDDEN HEIGHTS OF THE MONOLITHS.



...LEAPS... IS ENGULFED... VANISHES...

...LEAVING CONAN ALONE...



ALONE SAVE FOR...



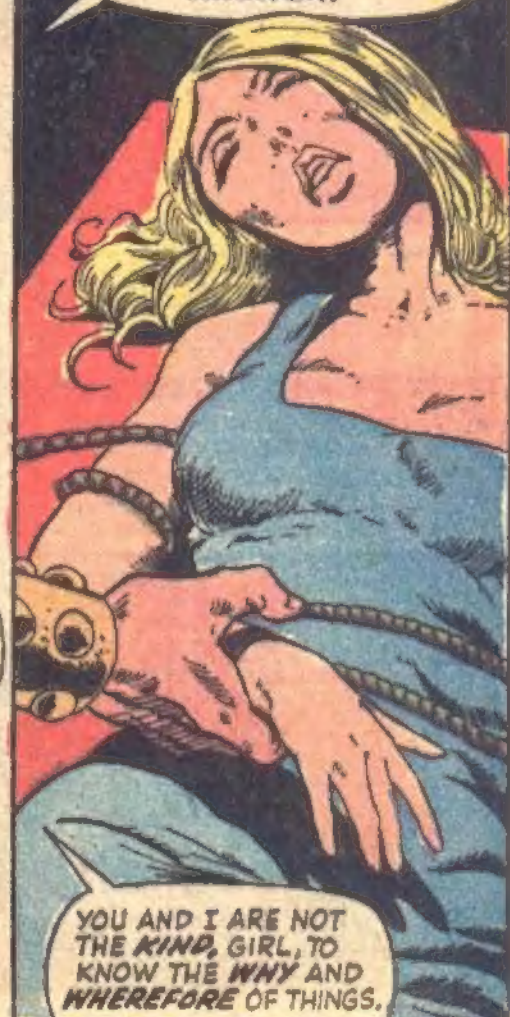
THE DEAD.



YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED AT HOME, GIRL...

...REARED A FAMILY...

YOU ASKED WHY, BEFORE YOU DIED...BUT NEVER GOT AN ANSWER.



YOU AND I ARE NOT THE KIND, GIRL, TO KNOW THE WHY AND WHEREFORE OF THINGS.



WE MERELY LIVE AND DIE...EACH IN OUR APPOINTED TIME...



...AS THESE HAVE DIED IN THEIRS.



IN THE FIRST GLOW OF DAWN, SOMETHING BLACK-STAINED YET STILL SHINING CATCHES CONAN'S EYE.

THE ARMLET.

THE SAME BAND WHICH SOMEHOW DREW THE MONSTER FIRST TO HIM, THEN TO THE HYRKANIAN...

...AS CARRION DRAWS FLIES.



HE RECALLS THE ONE WHO GAVE HIM THE ARMLET, WITH BIG SAD EYES AND HONEYED WORDS...

...IT MAY KEEP YOU SAFE...

...TILL YOU COME BACK TO...US.

FOR, HE'LL NOT COME BACK.

WELL, THE QUEEN WILL THINK IT'S DONE ITS GRISLY WORK...

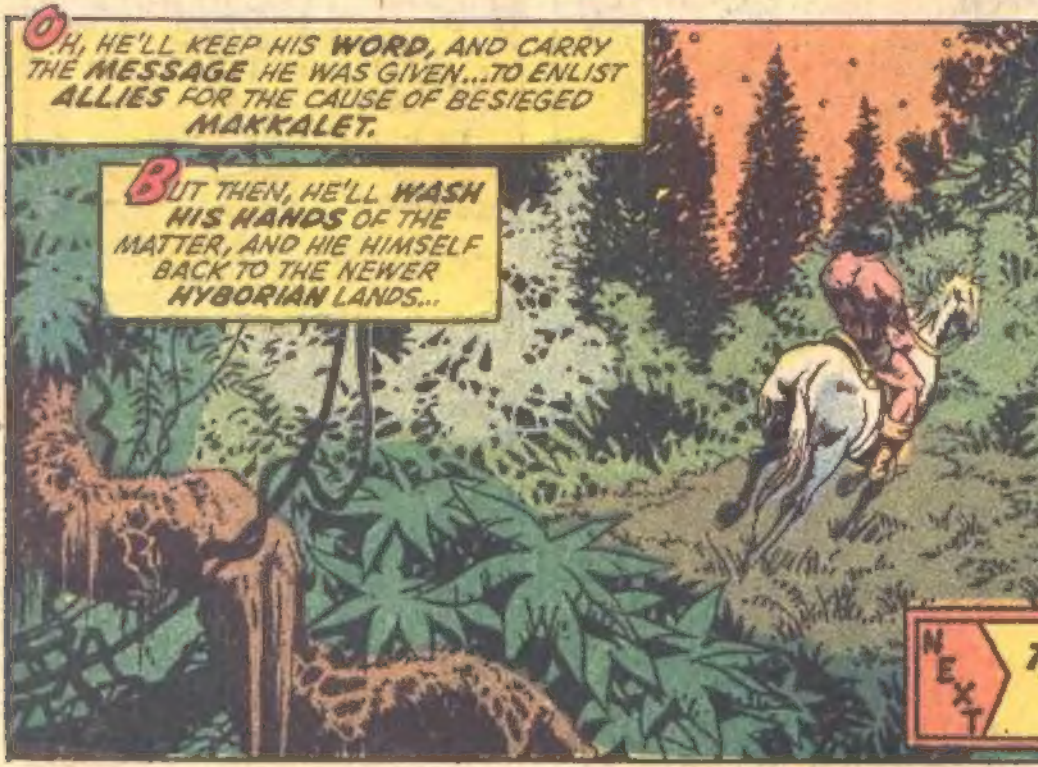


OH, HE'LL KEEP HIS WORD, AND CARRY THE MESSAGE HE WAS GIVEN...TO ENLIST ALLIES FOR THE CAUSE OF BESIEGED MAKKALET.

BUT THEN, HE'LL WASH HIS HANDS OF THE MATTER, AND HIE HIMSELF BACK TO THE NEWER HYBORIAN LANDS...

WHERE FOES STALK MOSTLY WITH BLOODY SWORD IN HAND, AND HONEST HATE IN THEIR EYES...

...NOT WHITE-LIMBED, AND SOFT AS MORNING DEWS...



NEXT THE SHADOW OF THE VULTURE!